



[AP 179 - "Lessons:" secular music in sacred space during the Syriac era](#)

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Call Number	AP 179
Part Number	Part I – Syro Malabar Church
Title	"Lessons:" secular music in sacred space during the Syriac era
Duration	29:46
Place of Recording	Athirampuzha, Kottayam
Date of Recording	31 July, 2018
Youtube URL	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uuosFHOsqTw
Video Segment(s)	

Notes

"Lessons:" secular music in sacred space during the Syriac era

Instrumental music during solemn Qurbana in Syriac in the Syro Malabar Church.

This video contains a collection of incidental music that used to be part of the solemn celebration of Syriac Qurbana. The respective instrumentalists performed these melodies as an introduction before the starting of Qurbana, during Communion, or wherever there were a few silent moments to fill in. The musicians referred to these melodies as “Lessons,” and the act of performing the melodies as “lissan kottuka” (Malayalam for playing to “Listen” or playing the lesson). It used to be an occasion to showcase the musicianship of the performer. The musicians used to consider the melodies to be their private property. They would teach them only to selected disciples. Often, performers received recognition based on the number and variety of melodies they knew and the expertise with which they performed them. The melodies were adaptations of practice lessons from the western music tradition, or even South Indian classical music compositions. In other words, the melodies were strictly secular and had no stylistic affinity to the sacred Syriac music repertoire. They were the result of the meeting of many cultures. Thus, this was an area where the sacred and the secular realms met inside the church during the liturgy. People did not seem to resist the permeability of those boundaries. Instead, we have reasons to believe that these performances received appreciation and acknowledgment from the worshippers. Each melody has a history of its own. For that reason, these incidental melodies deserve the attention of musicologists. We have been able to collect only a small number of melodies. Yet, they can be useful for cultural historians for an extensive amount of researches on the movement of music and the formation of cultural sensitivities.

Dr. Joseph J. Palackal, CMI

New York

25 March 2020



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